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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002998

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2008

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION: "POLICE RAID A WARNING TO KURDS AND TO GOT"

REF: ANKARA 1624

Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Police May 6 raided the Ankara offices of the Human Rights Association (HRA), seizing records and computers as part of an investigation of alleged support for terrorism. The HRA President believes the action is an attempt to warn NGOs and the GOT against supporting a planned conference on the Kurdish problem. Prosecutors have repeatedly taken the HRA to court over the years, but have failed to prove ties to terrorism. GOT reaction will be reported septel. End Summary.

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Police Seize Records from Ankara Offices  
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12. (C) On May 6 Ankara police raided both the national headquarters and the branch office of the HRA, hauling away numerous paper files, computer discs, and computers. HRA President Husnu Ondul told us 15 police and a State Security Court prosecutor entered the headquarters shortly after 9 a.m. and began searching and seizing documents. He said the prosecutor claimed the raid was part of an investigation of the HRA for providing aid and shelter to an illegal organization (Note: presumably referring to the terrorist PKK. End Note). Police later searched the Ankara branch office. Ondul claimed police did not keep detailed records of the seized documents. He said they include reports of human rights violations by security officials, some of which may reveal the names of the accusers.

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Raid Coincides with Meeting on EU Reform  
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13. (C) Ondul believes the action was staged by nationalist elements of the military and intelligence services (i.e. the Deep State) as a warning to the Kurdish community and the GOT. He noted that the raid took place on the same day he and other NGO leaders were scheduled to meet with FM Gul to discuss the GOT's plan for enacting human rights reform in order to meet EU membership criteria. Ondul averred that the timing was no coincidence, and speculated that the raid was a reaction to the well-known plans of the pro-Kurdish Democracy People's Party (DEHAP) to organize a national conference on the Kurdish problem. DEHAP is seeking broad sponsorship for the conference, which would include on its agenda the possibility of an amnesty for PKK supporters and other "political" prisoners. Ondul believes the police action was a warning to the GOT and NGOs against participating in the conference or supporting any reform proposals it might generate.

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HRA Frequently Harassed, Attacked Over Years  
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14. (U) Ondul noted that over the years police and prosecutors have frequently raided HRA offices and taken the organization to court, but each closure case has ended in acquittal. He averred that this raid was yet the latest example of State harassment; no legitimate evidence will be found and there will be no convictions.

15. (U) The HRA is Turkey's largest human rights organization, with an estimated 14,000 members and 34 branches nationwide. More than 400 court cases have been opened against the HRA over the past two years. In August, prosecutors indicted Ondul and 46 other HRA leaders in an ongoing case tied to a January 2001 raid of HRA headquarters. Since the 1990s, 14

HRA officials have been killed under suspicious circumstances. In 1998, then HRA President Akin Birdal was shot and critically wounded in his Ankara office; a former Jandarma sergeant was among those later convicted for the attack.

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Comment  
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16. (C) We think the timing of this raid is not a coincidence, and it does appear to be a warning from nationalist elements of the State. This tactic is all too common in Turkey -- reftel reports on the nearly simultaneous March 13 announcements of the closing of the pro-Kurdish HADEP party and the launching of a closure case against DEHAP. Like the HRA, HADEP and DEHAP have repeatedly been accused of supporting terrorism. However, despite intense scrutiny, prosecutors have not been able to prove these charges in court. We will raise this issue with the Foreign, Justice, and Interior ministries and report septel.  
PEARSON